



# Proper Use of Medications

The Rebbe begins the letter<sup>1</sup> with the teaching of Chassidus that we can learn a lesson in Avodas Hashem from everything we see and hear (in fact this idea is really born of true Emunah). This, continues the Rebbe, specifically applies to the central part of one's day – his profession.

The Rebbe then turns to the recipient's profession – a pharmacist – and highlights two lessons that can be learned from this trade.

BH, 20 Tammuz, 5709  
Greetings and blessings!

## PRESCRIPTIONS — PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL

Anyone who walks into a pharmacy worthy of its name and sees the many remedies that can heal various diseases – even critical ones – is certainly awed.

Yet, the pharmacist must explain to his patron – and even more importantly, to himself – that the medications serve as mere preparation. Two steps are still missing – and they are vital to the success of the medication.

a) A prescription from an expert doctor as to exactly which remedy to take for a particular ailment, as well as instructions in how to take it.

b) Moreover, the patient has to actually take the medicine [in accordance with those instructions].

Similarly:

Every single Jew is an emissary of the Hashem, and is given a portion of the world that he is entrusted to heal and re-

pair. And although he is provided with the necessary materials, there still remains the need for an expert's instructions, indicating exactly which remedies should be applied today, and which tomorrow etc., because without the expert advice, he may actually endanger rather than heal and destroy rather than build.

- (One might argue, “the entire community is holy,” and I am one of them: I can make my own inquiries into the Shulchan Aruch and decide on my own how I must behave – in a personal sense, and with regard to one's purpose in this world. Such an attitude can be compared to someone who, once he learns to read, buys medical books and instruments, and announces that he can now cure the ill.) -

Of greater significance, however, is the actual deed. Even someone who understands his illness and its cure very well, and has consulted expert medical advice, and has in his hands the exact prescribed medication – will not begin the process of healing until he actually takes the medica-

tion.

Even if he has all kinds of excuses<sup>2</sup>, his ailment, however, remains in full strength. Since the Divine intent is that he should heal himself, it is obvious that all of his excuses are mistaken, and are no more than the Yetzer Horah's insidious scheming.

## POISONOUS REMEDIES

Deep inside the pharmacy, there is another section with clear warning signs: “Danger! Poison!” Why is there poison among all these remedies? A wise person understands that what would normally be poisonous for a healthy person, may – in exceptional cases and in controlled quantities – be the only medication that is able to save the patient.

Continuing with our explanation of this parable, we can find two areas that correspond to this “poison”:

### Between Man and His Fellow:

The Torah is a Torah of kindness; “Its ways are ways of sweetness and all of its paths are peace.” Nevertheless, if, for in-

stance, a person is invited to eat at another's home and he is not certain about the food being kosher, he may not eat at all, even if that will cause his host to be embarrassed.

If someone is a Shabbat desecrator, but there is reason to believe that he might stop if he is continually reminded about it (obviously, this is talking about a case where it was already politely pointed out, with no success), there is an obligation to do so "until he screams" or even "until he hits."

If a person sees a group educating its members to not believe in G-d, His Torah, and His Mitzvot, he is obligated to protest strongly. He must inform them that even if they are saving this person's life in this physical world, they are destroying his soul and its eternal life. It is a commandment to save lives, and thus the people must be saved from them even [in normally unacceptable manners such as] stealing

etc.

There is, of course, the usual question: "I am a polite person. Even according to Jewish law, "manners precede Torah." So how can I act in the above mentioned manner? How can I steal when this is against the law, how can I scream at a person or embarrass him in public, regarding his desecration of Shabbos etc.?"

The answer is that this type of behavior for a healthy person would indeed be poisonous, but under certain dangerous circumstances, it is the only way to save this person from certain death.

#### **Between Man and His Creator:**

Similarly, there are some who complain against the Chassidim's custom to spend so much time studying Chassidic philosophy and meditating on those concepts before Davening, since they consequently miss the prescribed times for reading the *Shma* and Davening!

The reply is that certainly for healthy

people this would be harmful, but those who are spiritually ill have no other choice. Without doing so, the prayers will be just with the lips and not with the heart, which would render them completely invalid. [See the Rambam Hilchos Tefillah.]

However, as in the parable, there must be extra care taken to do so only in controlled quantities, and only when prescribed by an expert doctor.<sup>3</sup>

1. Igros Kodesh Vol. 3 Pages 144-147

2. Such as that the time or place is not right, or that he does not have enough influence, etc. — that only matters as far as reward and punishment are concerned, i.e. to be able to determine whether he is guilty of intentional dereliction, unintentional, or even if he is "forced" in which case he is free of responsibility.

3. The core of this translation was taken from the book "**Mind Over Matter**" with some minor changes.

## ומובן שכאשר אין יורדים גשמים – אזי יכולים לחגוג את שמחת בית השואבה בכל ה"שטורעם" ברחוב דוקא

כאשר מדברים אודות שמחת בית השואבה, לצאת לרקוד ברחובות וכו' - יש החושבים שדבר זה אינו מתאים ושייך אליהם. היתכן – טוען הוא ש"יהודי מכובד" כמותו יצא לרחוב לרקוד ביחד עם ילדים קטנים?!... לשיחה שנאמרת בבית הכנסת – מוכרח הוא להופיע, כדי שהכל יראו שיש לו מקום ב"מזרח", אבל ריקודים ברחוב ביחד עם ילדים קטנים, "בנערינו ובזקנינו" – אין הדבר מתאים עבורו!... ויש לקשר זה עם המעלה שבחג הסוכות דשנה זו לגבי חג הסוכות דשנה שעברה: בליל א' דחג הסוכות בשנה שעברה - ירדו גשמים (ע"ד ובדוגמת מצב של מיצר), אבל בשנה זו – הרי רואים במוחש שלא יורדים גשמים (מצב של הרחבה)! ומובן שכאשר אין יורדים גשמים – אזי יכולים לחגוג את שמחת בית השואבה בכל ה"שטורעם" ברחוב דוקא, ועד שהרחוב עצמו משתתף בשמחה וריקודים דשמחת בית השואבה, וזאת – ללא צורך להתגבר על ענין של נסיון, כי אם באופן של הרחבה, "לכתחילה אריבער".

(משיחת ליל א' דחג הסוכות תשמ"ה)